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# George Bush vindicated by CIA resignation

WASHINGTON—During his confirmation hearings, George Bush was thumbed down by some liberal Democrats as being too political for the CIA director's job, and now, this able, versatile man is high-minded enough to announce his resignation early so his successor can be installed that much sooner.

Bush's decision should make those worrywart senators eat crow, humble pie, peanuts, or whatever politicians are supposed to eat these days to admit they were wrong. A year ago, Sens. Frank Church, Patrick J. Leahy, and Gary Hart, sitting in judgment, praised Bush but didn't trust him.

The Senate finally confirmed Bush in January, and he has made a good record as CIA director. Nary a peep out of Church & Co.

Bush kept a low profile and performed well. Then, on Nov. 20, he had a six-hour meeting with Jimmy Carter that went well enough that speculators—and this town is rife with them—wondered if Carter might keep Bush on.

BUSH PUT that one down by resigning, effective Jan. 20, 1977. "I wanted to clear the air," he told me in his office. "I am damned sure that this position must be filled soon. This gives Mr. Carter more time to make his selection. Access and confidence in the director, by Congress, are more important than ever."

Bush took over the CIA just after it had gone through 18 months of investigation, and it was hardly a candidate for a government Academy Award. President Ford's executive order to reorganize this agency, making it more responsible to Congress, was new. Agency morale was only fair, and some congressmen still had their knives out.

The reorganization is not fully implemented, but morale is better at the CIA since Bush took over. Congressional confidence has been largely restored. In fact, there are so many congressional oversight committees now dealing with the CIA that are as complicated as the celebrated agency.

"It would be best," Bush says, "to have one joint congressional oversight committee, or at the most one for the House and one for the Senate." Spoken like a man who served in Congress and the executive branch, and appreciates how cluttered committees and the bureaucracy can get.

Bush contends there is no problem recruiting young people for the CIA, even for the covert and clandestine activities section. The CIA is even welcome on campuses again, he says.

The agency had a rough time maintaining its liaison with security agencies of other nations during the Watergate period, but Bush says, "They still look to the CIA as the strongest and best intelligence agency in the world. Some countries worried what all the disclosures would do to our relationship with them. They are not culturally adjusted to the way we must operate in the sunshine."

"The Soviets capitalized on some anti-CIA publicity, and even blamed us for the Legionnaire's disease."

"But I am sure they are grateful to learn what their wheat crop is going to

James Reston is on vacation.

be after our economic intelligence unit makes an estimate far more accurate than theirs."

Bush became chairman of the GOP in late 1972, bad luck for him because the Watergate scandal broke a few months later. But he had endured difficulty before as ambassador to the United Nations, U. S. representative in Peking and as a Republican in Texas. He was an amiable and fair-minded man in all these roles.

STILL, DURING the confirmation hearings, Sen. Leahy wondered whether Bush, as a Republican partisan, would be strong enough to tell the President "that he is wrong, if that becomes necessary." Leahy said he was more troubled by the Bush appointment than any he had considered as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"It was Sen. Church who went on the longest tirade against Bush. He found the appointment 'ill advised,' 'astounding,' and implored the committee 'not to make a travesty of our efforts to reform the CIA.' Though Bush was not aspiring for the vice presidency, Church and other Democrats thought he might, and Church said, 'it is wrong for him to want both positions even in a Bicentennial year.'"

Church leaned on the words of columnists to make his stand against Bush. At one point he quoted a George Will column laying out a scenario where the CIA would be used to make an administration look good during a presidential election. Church agreed with Will's conclusion that George Bush at the CIA would be "the wrong kind of guy at the wrong place at the worst possible time."

Tut, tut. All these gents were seeing Watergate goblins. Sen. Leahy's sleep could not have been disturbed by thoughts of Bush's work at the CIA. If the Senate doesn't do its job on reforming the CIA, Sen. Church should know it wasn't Bush's fault, but perhaps the cozy relationship some "old boys" in Washington have with "old boy" senators. And George Will's theorizing appears trivial when one looks back at the actual factors at work in the 1976 presidential election.